

Full Day Kindergarten

What You Need to Know
About Kindergarten in Newtown

Meet the Kindergarten Team!

● Hawley

- Kindergarten Teachers
 - Donna Albano
 - Deborah Lubin
- Reading Teachers
 - Brandi Oatis
 - Patti Vitarelli

● Middle Gate

- Kindergarten Teacher
 - Dorothy Schmidt
 - Tanya LaBonia
 - Kristen Delgado
 - Julie Yorty
- Reading Teacher
 - Peggy Kennedy

● Head O' Meadow

- Kindergarten Teachers
 - Gail Diminico
 - Miryam Kuligowski
- Reading Teacher
 - Elaine Sullivan

● Sandy Hook

- Kindergarten Teachers
 - Lisa Dievert
 - Sue Perry
 - Janet Vollmer
- Reading Teacher
 - Diane Dennis

Full Day Kindergarten and The Newtown Public School Strategic Plan

- **Strategy: Teaching and Learning**

We will develop and implement plans to ensure all staff use effective instructional tools, best practices, assessment data, and intervention resources to improve academic standing, 21st century skills and inspire students to excel.

- **Specific Results**

- Focus K-12 teaching and learning on the 21st century skills of communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and research and information fluency.
- Inspire students and staff to excel through a broad range of programs that encourage, excite and ignite student achievement.
- Demonstrate a standard of excellence as evidenced by the consistent implementation of professional practices.
- Utilize differentiated instruction as a fundamental means of providing appropriate interventions for students.

Our Research

- Kindergarten and Early Intervention Teachers held a planning meeting in the fall of 2011
 - Developed list of guiding questions for their FDK inquiry
 - Researched similar and local districts to find out which offer FDK
 - Planned visits and phone interviews to schools with FDK
- Kindergarten and Early Intervention Teachers shared their learning throughout the fall of 2011
 - Visit observations and information collected
 - Phone interview feedback
- Kindergarten and Early Intervention Teachers compiled their data in the winter of 2012
 - Here we are!

Who We Studied... and Why

- Ridgefield
- Woodbridge
- Easton

Know your competition!

Of the top two Demographic Reference Groups in Connecticut

- 100% of districts in DRG A offer more kindergarten instruction than Newtown does.
- 55% of districts in DRG B offer more kindergarten instruction than Newtown does.

We are and will continue to be compared to districts in the top DRGs in Connecticut.

Who We Studied... and Why

- Ridgefield
- Easton
- Bethel

Know your neighborhood!

In Fairfield County

- 11 of 23 towns offer full day kindergarten
- 4 of 23 towns offer extended day kindergarten to all students
- 4 of 23 towns offer full day for some students

83% of towns in Fairfield County offer more kindergarten instruction than Newtown does.

School programs are a factor in many home buyers' decisions; we are at a disadvantage with young families home-shopping in Fairfield County.

Our Guiding Questions

- What does full day enable you to do that ½ day did not?
- Did your standards increase? What did you add to the curriculum?
- Did you see any changes in scores and assessments? What have the first grade teachers observed?
- What does your daily and weekly schedule look like? Specials, computer time, rest period?
- Do you still have blocks, home living, art, creative centers?
- What kind of remedial or enrichment support do you have?

What We Learned

- In our 2-3/4 hour program, we provide our young learners with many experiences similar to those provided in full day programs, BUT
 - at a much quicker pace
 - with far less depth

What We Learned

In our 2-3/4 hour program, our teachers are compelled to make daily decisions about which required lessons to teach and which to leave out.

This leads to inconsistency of our kindergarten students' academic experience across classrooms and across the district.

What We Learned

- Kindergarten is often students' first formal opportunity to learn and apply the social skills vital to successful integration into a peer group, but we are limited by
 - Inadequate time for recess
 - Highly structured, academically-driven center time

What We Learned

- In our 2-3/4 hour program, students have limited time for practice of fine motor skills.
 - If students are asked to color their responses, there is not enough time to teach or encourage neatness.
 - Much student work involving cutting or coloring must be sent home incomplete; some families choose to work with their children to complete it and others do not.

What We Learned

- Our 2-3/4 hour program does not allow time for our youngest students to participate in recess every day as per state statute:

CT P.A. 04-224, S. 1. Sec. 10-221o.
Lunch periods. Recess.

What We Learned

- Our 2-3/4 hour program impedes a smooth transition to first grade.
 - Students' period of adjustment to full day of school occurs in first grade instead of in kindergarten.
 - Academic expectations for first grade have increased as dramatically as they have for kindergarten; limited instructional time will have a domino effect throughout the grades.

What We Learned

- In our 2-3/4 hour program, students are rushed from one learning task to the next, impeding the development of stamina in
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Independent work

The impact on the K-12 program is significant, as stamina for academic tasks is necessary for success as an independent learner.

What We Learned

- In 2-3/4 hours, there is not enough time to focus on the 21st Century Skills necessary to prepare students for college and career.
 - Student discourse is limited by time constraints.
 - Teachers lack the time needed to probe for deeper understanding and students have little to no opportunity to respond to higher order questioning.
 - Students' practice in computer skills such as keyboarding is severely limited.

All of this has significant implications for Newtown's K-12 instructional program. Students' preparation to be college- and career-ready 21st Century learners must start early if we are to build a quality K-12 instructional program in Newtown.

What We Learned

- In our 2-3/4 hour program, we cannot provide the number of instructional hours needed to teach the Common Core State Standards.
 - Newtown currently offers 137.25-183 hours per year of language arts instruction in kindergarten. The CSDE pacing guide for CCSS requires 355 hours.
 - Newtown currently offers 45.75-61 hours per year of mathematics instruction to students in kindergarten. The CSDE pacing guide for CCSS kindergarten mathematics requires 155 hours.

The Bottom Line

Our kindergarten teachers are very talented educators and have historically provided our youngest learners with a solid foundation for their academic careers.

However, the playing field has changed, and we need to adjust our game in order to remain competitive.

Resources

- Connecticut State Department of Education student census data
- CSDE Position Statement on English Language Arts Education, 12/3/08
- CSDE Mathematics Specialist
- CT Statute P.A. 04-224, S. 1. Sec. 10-221o. Lunch periods. Recess.
- CSDE pacing guides
- Common Core State Standards, www.corestandards.org
- Recent newspaper articles
- Research on the efficacy of full-day kindergarten